

THE

HISTORIAN

www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

September 2015

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, September 17, 2015, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker for the program will be J. E. Loiacano, renowned coach of football and track. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. **Respectfully we must insist that you please call by noon on Wednesday, September 16, 2015,** to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-eight people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.



CEMETERY TOUR

October looms, so it's time to begin final plans for the Hancock County Historical Society 22nd Annual Cemetery Tour. It will be held on Halloween night Saturday, **October 31, 2015**, at Cedar Rest Cemetery on Second Street. We will need volunteers to help prepare the cemetery for the tour (mark the path, etc.), to portray citizens buried there, to act as guides, and to serve at the Lobrano House. We also seek donations of cookies, candy, cupcakes, etc. To volunteer, please call the Society at 467-4090.



American Patriot

John Hancock

1737—1793

John Hancock

By
Jackie Allain

Who was John Hancock other than the American Revolutionary for whom Hancock County, Mississippi, was named? He was a statesman, politician, and governor. He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and was a leader of the movement toward revolution in the American colo-

nies. He later served as a president of the Continental Congress, and he was elected governor of Massachusetts for nine terms.

John Hancock was born in Braintree, Massachusetts, on January 23, 1737. His parents were John Hancock, a Harvard graduate and minister, and Mary Hawke. After the death of his father when Hancock was seven, he was adopted by his uncle, a wealthy Boston merchant. He graduated from Harvard in 1754, served for a time in his uncle's office as a clerk, and went to Lon-

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MONDAY — FRIDAY
10:00AM — 3:00PM
Closed: 12:00—1:00 (lunch)

MISSION STATEMENT

“TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION.”

don in 1760 as the firm’s representative. He spent a year there. In 1763 Hancock became a partner in his uncle’s thriving business.

When his uncle died in 1764, Hancock inherited the business. He was one of many colonists who were opposed to Great Britain’s passing of the Stamp Act in 1765 since it taxed the kinds of transactions his company was involved with. As a result, to avoid having to pay these taxes, Hancock ignored the law and began smuggling goods into the colonies.

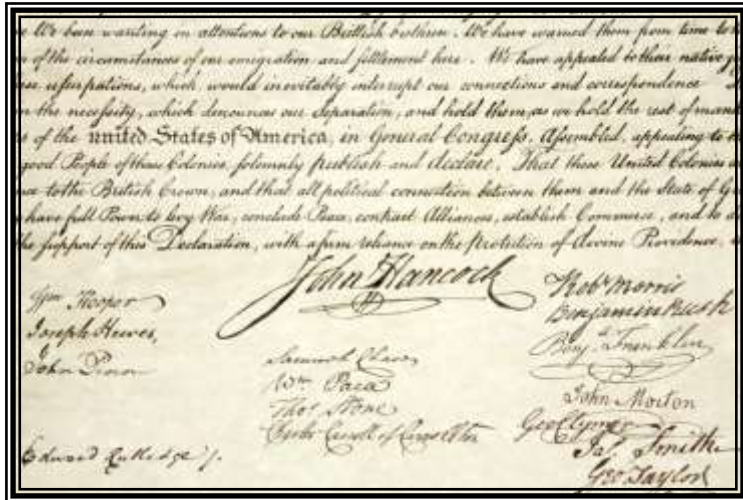
Hancock was elected to the Massachusetts General Court in 1766 at the suggestion of other colonists who were against British interference in the colonies. Hancock had attracted attention as something of a hero after one of his smuggling ships, the *Liberty*, was seized by the British. He received more votes than Samuel Adams (1722-1803), one of the most famous American Revolutionary leaders, in the next General Court election. Meanwhile, Hancock was threatened with large fines by

Britain for the *Liberty* affair. Though the fines were never collected, Hancock never got his ship back.

Every time the British made a move that affected the American colonies, especially anything involving taxes, Samuel Adams and other anti-British agitators spoke out against it. The Boston Massacre of 1770 increased colonial anger toward Britain and established a tension that continued to grow. Hancock wavered for a time, but when the strength of public opinion became clear, he made the courageous announcement that he was totally committed to making a stand against the actions of the British government—even if it cost him his life and his fortune.

During the Boston Tea Party of 1773, Boston colonists disguised as Native Americans dumped three shiploads of British tea into the harbor as a protest against the British government. After this rebellious act, the British passed the Boston Port Bill of 1774, which ordered the closing of the port until the





John Hancock's famous signature—large enough for King George to read

cost of the tea was repaid. Hancock's reputation grew during this time to the point that he became one of the main symbols of the anti-British radicalism. How much of this was planned by him and how far he had been pushed by Samuel Adams is uncertain. What is known is that when British General Thomas Gage finally decided to try to achieve peaceful relations with the colonies, Hancock and Adams were the only two Americans to whom he refused even to consider giving amnesty.

Hancock was elected president of the Continental Congress in May 1775 and married Dorothy Quincy in August of the same year. He hoped to be named to command the army around Boston and was disappointed when George Washington was selected instead. Hancock voted for, and was the first representative to sign, the Declaration of Independence. Even though he served as president of the Continental Congress for two years, he did nothing to distin-

guish himself while in office, and he resigned in October 1777. He was also embarrassed that same year when Harvard College, which he had served as treasurer since 1773, accused him of mismanaging university funds and demanded repayment. Hancock was forced to pay \$22,000. In 1785 he admitted that he still owed \$1,500; however, this sum was eventually paid out of his estate after his death.

Like most public figures, Hancock had enemies. His opponents spread the word that he was a shallow man who lacked strong beliefs and was only interested in helping himself. Nevertheless, they could not prevent his election as the first governor of Massachusetts in 1780. He was reelected several times until retiring in 1785 just before Massachusetts went through a financial crisis. Although he claimed that his retirement was based on illness, Hancock's enemies claimed that he had seen the coming storm, which was caused in part by mistakes he

Shay's Rebellion

Shay's Rebellion was a 1786-87 uprising by farmers and small property owners in Massachusetts who demanded lower taxes, court reforms, and a revision of the state constitution.

had made in handling the state's money. After Shay's Rebellion, Hancock was reelected governor.

In 1788 Hancock was elected president of the Massachusetts State Convention to ratify the new Constitution. He was approached by members of the Federalist Party who wanted a set of amendments added to the document. They supposedly hinted that if Hancock presented the amendments, they would help him be named president if



Grave of John Hancock
Granary Burying Ground
Boston, MS

Washington declined the job. The truth of this story has never been confirmed.

In the end, Hancock did offer the amendments, and Massachusetts ratified the Constitution. Washington accepted the presidency, and Hancock remained as Massachusetts governor, his popularity unchallenged. He died in office on October 8, 1793, in Boston, Massachusetts.

SOURCES:

Gaines, Ann. *John Hancock: President of the Continental Congress*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Pubs., 2001.

Koslow, Philip. *John Hancock: A Signature Life*. New York: Watts, 1998.

Unger, Harlow G. *John Hancock: Merchant King and American Patriot*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000.

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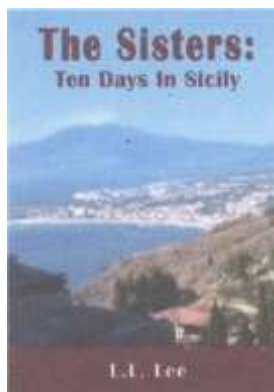
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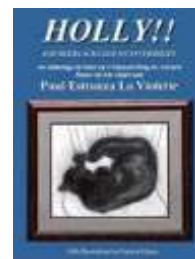
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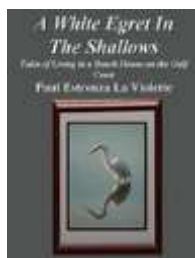
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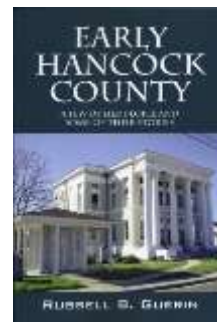


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Certified Public Accountant

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